

DEVOUR

Raleigh, North Carolina's scene has been both changing and evolving, and rising and falling since the 1980s when giants like *Corrosion of Conformity* had been walking around like Tyrannosaurus of metal/hardcore. The town still has a sound of its own but there is one band who dares to deconstruct what is expected of them while still exhibiting musical signatures of their area. I had the chance to catch up with Devour on a Saturday evening before band practice at their practice space. I plopped a recorder in front of them and recorded an hour plus of material. Here is the abridged version.

Interview and photos by Will Butler

MRR: How did the band form?

Cody: The band formed after the demise of Cross Laws.

Daniel: I think I came up with the name because it is after the Japanese record label. Kind of like Selfish had named themselves after a Japanese record label.

Dave: I learned about the band from NorthCarolinahardcorepunkmetalfreaks.org. I was on this forum that Daniel had around for awhile. The band needed a bassist. I've known these dudes for awhile, going to shows, it just kind of worked out. Daniel: There's a sweet video of Dave crowd surfing at the last Cross Laws show, so we knew he

was down.

MRR: So you guys set forward to start a Japanese-influenced hardcore band?

Jamie: I wouldn't necessarily say we were going for that. That's just what it ended up being in a way.

Daniel: I definitely wanted to do something more ambitious than my last band. Cross Laws, especially towards the beginning, was super stripped down...super simple, and we recorded everything ourselves. I kind of wanted to write more complicated songs and get good recordings. Basically make everything bigger and more intense.

Matt: It's not like the same old 1980s US hardcore. We were trying to incorporate more European and Japanese influences.

Cody: Like kittens.

Matt: Like Kittens and King Crimson.

Dave: That's probably the best way to describe our sound.

MRR: Your lack of an identity online is something I admire about your band. What is the reasoning behind shying away from the Internet?

Daniel: We discussed that one night and we knew we didn't want a MySpace. We thought about doing other kinds of websites but it just hasn't

seemed important.

Dave: I've always been really turned off by the whole friendship contest kind of aspect to that, the super social thing. I mean, promoters actually look at bands' MySpaces, and look at how many friends, and use that as a meter of how good the band is.

Cody: Also we talked about having our presence be more real, because people will check out a song or two and be like, "Oh, that's neat!" and then just forget about it. This is more organic, the way people come to find the band.

Daniel: We didn't want to be the kind of band, where like Cody said, you can give someone and hear one or two songs. If you like us, we want you to get the record and have it and hold it. It's not just some file on the Internet. There's artwork involved and everybody's lyrics are included. It is better to have that physical thing to sit around and listen to than some certain amount kilobyte file on somebody's computer.

MRR: Tell me about the progression from the LP to the new *Insect Circuitry 7*.

Matt: No progression, all regression. Actually I think it sounds noisier and heavier. I think it sounds a little more blown out than the LP, but musically I don't think we've changed that much. We all still listen to the same sort of stuff.



Dave: The new songs that we have that aren't on the 7" are more of a progression towards sort of a weirder and noisier sound.

Matt: But not noisy in a confused sense; not just constantly blown out and indecipherable, more noisy in that it sounds layered...and almost, not to sound cheesy, but "psych rock" in a way. Not something you're gonna sit around and be like, "Whoa dude, fire up a double!" It's pretty uncomfortable. It kind of reminds me of old industrial stuff in a way, like old Swans or something. It is really uncomfortable heavy music. No one has heard that stuff yet so look out.

Daniel: I think the leap for me is that the 7" is completely different. The LP was all about getting some killer riffs and stitching them together in a way that makes sense, and Dave has taught me a lot about classical and avant-garde music, and I've done some reading about that stuff. Now I think my songs come more from ideas or concepts, like, "Can I write a song with no repeating parts?" or "Can I write a song that starts with a guitar solo?" The songs are real conceptual in a way that kind of adds to the messiness and unsettledness of it, since the songs are not fluid...at least my songs aren't. I think the three of us who write, write very different kinds of songs.

MRR: I'm obviously consumed (which I thought was funny because you guys are Devour) in the Raleigh, North Carolina punk scene. There is definitely a wax and wane that we've all been a part of here. Please tell me about the local scene as you see it. I feel like each one of you has a very different background as far as musical tastes and where you come from.

Daniel: In terms of Devour, it seems like we formed at a time when the scene was maybe waning more than waxing. There was a moment there where everyone was on the same page and all the bands kind of sounded a little bit similar. Everyone was super into '80s hardcore and then everyone got bored with that. We all wanted to play music with different people and think about different ideas so I think we're sort of a product of faction.

Cody: Product of faction?

Daniel: Yeah, I mean not faction...not like we

hate each other, but in that we were not clones of each other.

Matt: It seems that it always goes in circles and in waves. Everything is going really well when there's a lot of energy in the music scene. It's not just in hardcore, maybe like a town-wide thing.

Cody: King's was a huge venue for bands that either didn't have a huge following or came from smaller scenes like the punk scene. When King's closed, that was when I saw the house scene blow up. Also, people take that shit for granted. They just kind of assume that it's always gonna be there. When I was living at Morgan Street, I liked having a place to do shows, but also it's a bit to deal with.

Matt: One thing too, is that I think you can beat something into the ground really quickly. I remember when we were in Cross Laws there was a three month stretch where it seemed like we played every show that came through here, and after a while, it doesn't matter if you're the best band in the world, people are eventually gonna

get pretty blasé about everything. "Ohh they're playing again, whatever." It's nice to have house shows but it kind of bums me out sometimes because it seems like if you have them too often you start getting people who don't wanna come to shows for the music, they just wanna come hang out and party. I mean, I'm not anywhere to tell anyone not to party, but it's kind of a bummer when you're really stoked about seeing a band but you look around and everyone else is there just getting blasted and they don't give a shit about this awesome band that's playing...they're just sitting out front drinking this or whatever. It has to be sort of muted in my mind. You have to try to keep it fresh and interesting or else people are just going to get bored with it. I think that's just human nature. I don't think that's just with hardcore. I think that's just any kind of music that is sort of underground.

Daniel: Your question sort of made me think too, we're sort of emphasizing that things are discontinuous and scenes rise and fall but at the same time I feel like there's a really strong regional identity too. Weirdly I kind of thought we'd end up sounding a lot like COC essentially, like Animosity or Technocracy, and that's nothing we ever set out to do. When you live in this town you sort of gravitate to a combination of metal and punk and rock, it's in our blood. We couldn't get away from it if we tried.

Cody: I'm reading this book, it's about architecture actually; I'm in a section that talks about musical identities of cities and the acoustic value of different cities. It's sort of like that. We've inadvertently been immersed in that, and it's hard to not have that come out of us.

MRR: Do you have new material written?

Daniel: I don't know how many new songs we have but once they're done we could probably put out an LP's worth of new songs and no one's heard them.

Cody: If I could get off my ass.

Matt: Yes if Cody can and I finish the lyrics. But when people hear those songs I think they're going to be like, "Damn, what's going on with these guys?" I really think they move away from what we were just talking about, that regional sound



they're fucked up as shit. I mean, they like hardcore songs, but I think the influence is more apparent. I think we've also gotten along with other bands that we sound similar to. I think you're going to have a real hard time gentrifying what we're doing now. I think you're going to hear it and be like, "I don't know what this sounds like. This sounds like bad or something."

Not that it is that important, but I wonder how it's going to lose people, if they're going to be like, "This doesn't sound like the LP. What the fuck is this?" Once again it's ridiculous to create and do the same thing over and over. What's the... I don't wanna be fucking AC/DC.

Tell the guys all the time that if I wasn't in the band and I was watching the band and heard songs it would make me want to put my back against a wall just for a bunch of different reasons. Parts that aren't obviously barreling at you. I think are really interesting and really comfortable. I like that kind of music. I like music that makes me grit my teeth and I make me go up. We're going for a certain feeling as opposed to sounding a certain way, and I think becoming more adept at finding that kind of sound in our music. Whether or not people get it, I really care... I get it, these guys get it, and I hope that some people get it and enjoy it a lot. I hope that it's something that makes people think that it's not something that you put on a shelf. "Yeah this rocks."

I'd say we've barely ever influenced anybody that we actually sound like. We don't take things from other people... this isn't collage. Everything comes really organically from us, and things feel familiar, we tend to question and we break them apart and make them our own. It seems like influence is almost a nagging thing to us. "Oh that sounds too much like [band name] too much like that." Let's take it apart and make it weirder.

MRR: Where does your influence in writing lyrics come from?

Cody: When we started playing I had always wanted to write songs and be a singer or whatever, but I'd never written hardcore songs. For awhile, when I would sit down to write a song I'd say "Okay, I have to write a hardcore song." That sort of tinted my lyrics for a little while. I pulled up stuff that I had written years ago, like "Smells like Piss in Here." It was pretty much verbatim from something I wrote probably two years before we started playing. I got kind of defensive when the LP came out I was like, "...whoa this is stuff I mean that I'm putting out there and people are reading it. I got kind of freaked out about that. Sort of like my id or ego was like, "No no no, I don't want them to know me!"

Daniel: I mean our music is the same way though, like I was saying about the way we deconstruct riffs, it's almost the exact same thing.

Dave: It's like we do something and we don't want people to understand us in a way.

Daniel: Not to talk about your lyrics Cody, but when you are super blunt, there's an impact. When you sing "Where's the laugh track to your shitty life?" it sticks out and people remember it.

Cody: I'd like people to think about what it is I'm writing, and it's more interesting for me to pose questions than to try to come up with solutions for something like this is a social problem and this is how I think it should be fixed. That is arrogant and silly...

Matt: ...and it's been done before a million times.

MRR: You guys seriously destroyed Kollapsee-fest a few years ago. What was it like being a more plain-clothes looking punk band playing a crust fest?

Matt: Hank Williams went up to see that show and mentioned that there was a group of people in front of him who were like, "Who are these hipster scene douchebags?"

Daniel: ...and one kid was like, "I didn't know

Weezer was playing."

Matt: A lot of the bands that I've seen just look like regular people. They don't spend a bunch of time trying to pursue some sort of image. They just worry about what they're doing musically and they don't worry about fashioning. They worry about playing their songs to the best of their ability. Even bands that I've seen that I didn't think necessarily were the greatest musicians, they weren't trying to put on airs about who they are, they just went out and did. Those are always the bands that I like and they usually just look like regular guys. You wouldn't be able to pick them out on the street, or if you did you'd think they were like some weird scene kid or some shit. With that said, I loved playing that fest, there were some really good bands I met some nice people, too.

Cody: There was definitely an air of, "Who the fuck are these guys?" because we didn't fit in. When these cliques and factions start it's counterproductive. We're all trying to do the same thing, at least I think. That sort of mentality just really pisses me off.

Daniel: We don't fit in musically very well as a crust band either. I feel like maybe our visual identity was matching our musical identity as well. We obviously owe a big debt to a lot of these types of bands, but maybe we configure ourselves against them.

Jamie: I wish people would just cultivate weirdness rather than having a herd mentality.

Dave: It sounds like we didn't enjoy playing Kollapsee-fest... it was totally a blast. They did a really good job with it.

Daniel: We didn't end up doing it but we were asked to play No Way Fast too. When you look at the bands that played both fests, Waste of Time, Direct Control, they are bands that cut right to what's intense and ripping in music and aren't following the scene. If we're doing something like this here is then...

Cody: ...we might be doing something right.

Matt: Paresylic is like that, too. I think they get lumped in with crust punk bands. I think they are kind of a cross-over band. Brutal hardcore mixed with almost early '90s death metal in parts and thrash metal. Nothing says crust to me when I hear them.

MRR: Tell me about your experience about the weird barn campout fest in Conover, North Carolina? Did you find your vision quest animals?

Dave: Our spirit animals were a gigantic hornet, the guy with the face tattoos, and a really scary crow.

Matt: Cattle, hornets, and a guy who sliced his head up with a bottle and tried to seal up the wound with a maxipad. I had this weird idea that the fest would be Woodstock for punks.

Daniel: When we heard about it, it seemed like there was all this possibility, as if anything could happen, but then nothing happened.

Matt: We made our own fun. We played some nice games. I extreme flying disc. We also played a really good set.

Cody: We rolled out of the van being all goofy throwing a disc and it was another instance of, "Who the fuck are these guys?"

Matt: I had grandeur of 50 people playing Frisbee with us. It was definitely a strange night. We ate a bunch of mushrooms that night.

Cody: I hope my mom never reads this. We went on a strange, strange journey.

Matt: I'm going to drop a copy of this interview off



at her house.

Cody: The guy who owns the place took us on a tour. There was a pond that was maybe 100 yards away but it took us two hours to get there, or so it seemed. The pond was like a Mecca when we got there.

Matt: I must have looked like a freak. I thought it was going to be warm so I wore cut-offs. I ended up wearing a scarf and a balaclava and every stitch of clothing I had with me. Everything but a pair of pants, which I bet I would have felt fine wearing. There was a lot of laughing at stuff you probably wouldn't find funny...

Daniel: ...your mama smells like slug shit!

Cody: We also made the fact that no one was going to fuck anything weird. Jamie disappeared for awhile and we were scared he was fucking something weird.

Matt: Who wants to tell the story of the guy who smashed a bottle over his head?

Cody: So we were sitting around the little camp stove making tea or whatever. There was this car beside us that was blasting god awful music: blasting some kind of douché metal. We were making jokes, and Luke, the guy who put this on, comes out with this dude gushing blood from his head and playing with the blood while talking incoherently like, "Blah!tch!tch!tch!" Luke piles the guy into that car with a bunch of towels saying they were going to the hospital, which apparently didn't happen. The story is they went to his house and told him to go to bed and put a towel on his head because they were scared his was going to get institutionalized...which I thought would have been a good idea.

Daniel: It's like this fest was a memorial for a guy who died a year ago and stuff like this happened.

MRR: How do you get along as a band?

Cody: There's no ego, there's no drama. No one wants to be band dictator.

Matt: I hear horror stories about other bands about how small and so did this...that doesn't ever seem to

happen. We all have a good give and take. I think if we ever do a long tour it's going to be great.

MRR: At the Attake, Parasitic, and Raw Nerves show, you had 16 year old Ashley sing for a song. Are you going to continue to have her sing?

Dave: It was kind of a spur-of-the-moment thing. Matt: I'd be into her doing it again. She loves Devour and did a really good job. I have a nickname for her, Kill or Be Killed. Seriously, she goes off harder than so many other people. She's this little girl and straight up fucks people up in the pit. I think it's awesome. She gets wild, not just for Devour but for her to be in general.

MRR: What other bands do you play in?

Matt: I'm in Stripmines.

Dave: I'm in a few different bands. Antibubbles, my main other band, is a Weezer style power pop band. Matt used to be in that band, too. I play guitar in that band and sing. I've done things with Future Kings on Nowhere, which is more of an acoustic pop-punk band. I like to spread out the stuff I'm active in.

MRR: What records have you been listening to lately since you're all record geeks?

Jamie: I listened to The Misfits all day today.

Cody: I don't think I listened to music today. I mainly listen to music at work. Last thing I listened to at home was The Wenkerthans. I get no score points for my musical selections.

Daniel: I listen to a lot of glam rock and now wave and post-punk stuff. I think my musical tastes are turning into those of a sixteen year old goth girl: Joy Division and The Cure.

Matt: I listen to nothing but hardcore punk all the time. Lots of Killing Joke, lots of The Swans. I've been listening to a lot of Swedish death metal and some other American stuff like Hipping Corpse and Incantation. For some reason I've been lis-

tening to a lot of Out Cold. I've seen a lot of bands recently and I've been listening to a lot of that too. I like the Coughing Fit EP. I've been listening to the Raw Nerve LP a lot. I think they are a really talented band. I've been listening to a lot of jazz. Not new white guy jazz, but a lot of old stuff.

Dave: I think you can expect a new Devour jazz 7. Matt: Too bad that will never show up in my drumming. Those guys are actually really good and I'm just a hack. Also I've been listening to lots of Bathory.

Dave: It varies day to day. Today was DOA and Envy. Been listening to Anamenaguchi a lot... young guys, they have a hacked NES and a hacked Gameboy and play as a full band with high energy and it's a lot of fun. Hyper-positive 3-bit.

MRR: Any last words?

Dave: We're probably going to tour Europe next summer. It's in the works.

Cody: We're working on a new LP soon.

Daniel: We have a song tentatively called "Pecan Sandies" right now. It's a fucking ripper. It's our crustiest song.

Matt: These are the titles of the songs for the next LPs: "Switcheroo," "Duga Duga," "Bangors and Mash," "Follen Tornado," "Hippingest Pecan Sandies," "Turanga Loda," "Black Metal," and "Blatter Acid". We're going to call it the *Hippingest Pecan Sandies Ever*.

Daniel: So...this guy was talking about mysterious guy hardcore.

Cody: Mysterious guy hardcore? "We swoop in, in the dead of night, play a show and just as quickly evaporate into the ether."

MRR: You know I'm going to write all this into the description so people say what the hell?

Dave: You're going to bend the shit out of this. Everyone! Black ops psychedelic interwined mysterious guy King Crimson kitten-loving black metal mushroom-eating pretentious seedy douchebags who don't enjoy anything who try too hard.

Cody: We're never going to be asked to play a show again.

Matt: This is Devour's death now for *Maximum-rocknroll*.

